in the lending rate for agriculture with a view to extending the full benefit of declining interest rates to agriculture sector, particularly to the small and marginal farmers. Consequent to the annoucement, all Public Sector Banks have reduced their lending rate to a single digit rate not more than 9% per annum and in some cases 8.5% per annum on crop loans up to a ceiling of Rs. 50,000/-. This single digit lending rate have benefited most of the crop loan account holders and covered almost all small and marginal farmers.

Weeding out of excess staff

1446. SHRI TARIQANWAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is facing financial crunch to meet all its liabilities including payment of salaries and wages to its employees;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to weed out the excess staff in Government offices; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Adequate budgetary provision has been made to meet all liabilities including payment of salaries and wages to Central Government employees.

(c) and (d) It has been the continuous endeavour of the Government to optimize and rightsize its staff strength so as to contain non-plan non-developmental expenditure.

LIC's loan to Jet Airways for fleet expansion

1447. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has sanctioned and disbursed a huge loan of Rs. 800 crore to Jet Airways for its fleet expansion programme;

(b) if so, the details of loan alongwith interest rate charged by LIC;

(c) what are the details of collateral submitted by the company,